District Review Report

School District No. 40 (New Westminster)

April 18 - 21, 2004

Submitted to the Minister of Education

By District Review Team Chair
Wendy Herbert, Superintendent, School District No. 64 (Gulf Islands)

District Review Report

2003/2004

District Name:	New Westminster
District Number:	40
Superintendent:	Ron Bennett
Date of Visit:	April 18-21, 2004
Team Chair:	Wendy Herbert, Superintendent, SD 64 (Gulf Islands)
Team Members:	Mike Abercrombie, Teacher, SD 75 (Mission) Dineen Manuel, Parent, SD 74 (Gold Trail) Janine Fernandes, Accountability Department, Ministry of Education Irene Corman, Director of Education, SD 61 (Greater Victoria) Joey Sahli, Secondary Principal, SD 43 (Coquitlam)

Context

The City of New Westminster is part of the Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD) and is located in the region's geographic center with a population of approximately 59,000 people.

The New Westminster School District has a current student enrolment of 5,916 in Kindergarten to Grade 12 and also includes students from Community, Adult and International Education Programs. The School District's enrolment has steadily grown over the past few years and is projected to continue to increase until 2011 when the anticipated enrolment will reach approximately 7,060.

The student population is reflective of the city's population with a full range of social and cultural backgrounds which combine to form a rich and diverse presence in the schools. There are 403 Aboriginal students, 717 ESL students, and 534 special education students receiving assistance in their classrooms. There are 368.25 FTE teachers in the District. There are 12 schools in the District (9 elementary, 2 middle, and 1 secondary school). In addition, there are three Youth Alternate Programs, and two Adult Learning Centres in the District. The annual budget for the School District is 45.093 million dollars.

New Westminster is a strong and progressive school district, providing an extensive range of thoughtful learning opportunities. Relationships among the District partners are exceptionally positive, open and collaborative. The small geographic area facilitates efficient and effective contact among district and school communities. The Team acknowledges the intense focus on improved student achievement since 1999 and the growth that has occurred in the District as a result.

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Summary of Process

The Team met Monday morning with the Senior Leadership Team consisting of Ron Bennett, Superintendent, John Woudzia, Assistant Superintendent and Susan Close, Assistant Superintendent, in addition to the Aboriginal Educational Coordinator and other members of the Senior Management Team. Other educational partners that were represented included Canadian Union of Public Employees, New Westminster Principals' and Vice-Principals' Association, New Westminster Teachers' Union, District Parent Advisory Council and School Trustees.

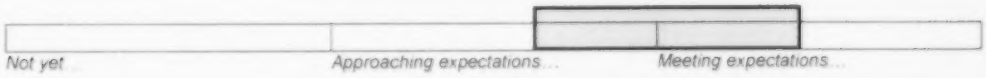
The Team was welcomed to the District by James Janzen, Vice-Chair of the Board of Trustees. The District presented an overview of the context and the School District accountability contract. Presentations were made by Ron Bennett, Susan Close, John Woudzia, Ronnie Riehm, along with impressions and reflections by representatives of District Parent Advisory Council, New Westminster Teachers' Union, Canadian Union of Public Employees and New Westminster Principals' and Vice-Principals' Association.

Members of the Team subsequently met with each of the schools in the District including one of the three Youth Alternate Programs, namely RECAP, as well as the First Nations Advisory Council. The focus of the conversations was the 10 Points of Inquiry. Schools visited were: New Westminster Secondary School, Herbert Spencer, Lord Tweedsmuir, Sir Richard McBride, Hume Park, Lord Kelvin, Queen Elizabeth, John Robson, Connaught Heights and F. W. Howay Elementary Schools, Glenbrook Middle School, and Queensborough Middle School. At each of the schools team members met with the Administration and representatives of the School Planning Council, and in some cases additional teachers.

The Team wishes to acknowledge the School District for the genuine welcome at the District office and in the schools and programs that were visited. The warm welcome reflected the comprehensive preparation and organization for the District Review process.

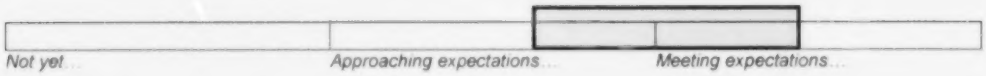
Observations in Key Areas - Focus on Student Achievement

1. *Goals:*
   Improving districts and schools have a strong instructional focus. This focus is made visible in relevant goals for improving achievement for all students.



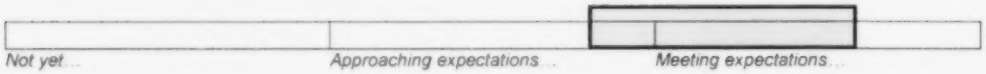
- Although no schools have a goal specific to the improved achievement of Aboriginal students, the District has developed one goal and four objectives in this area.
- All schools reflect the District literacy goals.

2. *Rationale:*
Improving districts and schools have a thorough and connected set of reasons, **based on evidence**, for the selection of their student achievem ent goals.



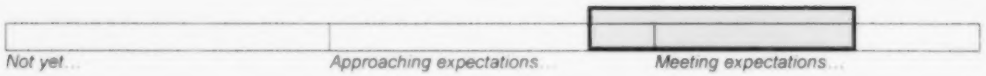
- In the area of literacy, many schools have based their rationale on evidence clearly linked to student achievement.
- A few schools have yet to consider their own context in setting their individual goals.
- Once the District and schools align the Aboriginal goal and objectives, the evidence for the rationale will be apparent.

3. *Data:*
Improving districts and schools are actively considering at least three sour ces of evidence including classroom, school, district and provincial data. The analysis of this evidence informs the selection of the District goals and is used to monitor progress.



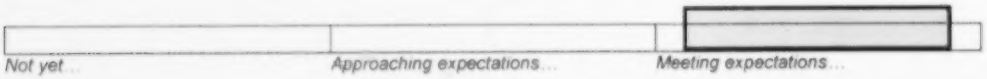
- Almost all schools are actively considering at least three sources of evidence including classroom, district and provincial data in the area of literacy.
- The District highly supports schools in the consistent analysis of classroom, school, district and provincial data in the area of literacy.
- Although the District and school goals identify provincial FSA results as targets for improvement, the District and schools have a rich source of ongoing perf ormance data in the area of literacy.
- The District is just beginning to consider evidence beyond provinc ial data to support their Aboriginal goal.

4. *Strategies:*
Improving districts and schools have well-organized, focused im provement plans in place. The strategies selected to achieve the goal s are an intelligent blend of research, best practice, and innovati ve thinking.



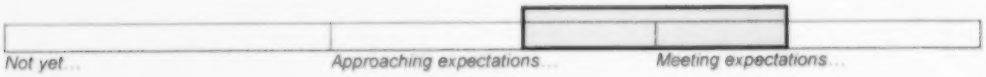
- At the district level, extensive leadership is being provided to support the literacy goal.
- Thoughtful, research-based and systematic strategies for literacy have been developed and implemented in schools to improve student learning.
- Strategies to address the Aborigi nal goal are being developed and are in the process of being implemented. The work that has been d one on the Enhancem ent Agreement will assist in this developm ent.

5. *Structures:*
Improving districts and schools have aligned structures – resources, time, organizations – to get the results they want. This includes, but is not limited to, effectively differentiating resources in the areas of highest need for improvement.



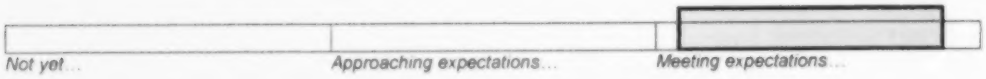
- The District has done an outstanding job of developing structures to support the literacy goal.
- Almost all schools have made structural adjustments to time and/or services based upon student need, as determined from data analysis.

6. *Results:*
Improving districts and schools get improved results – at the classroom, school and district levels.



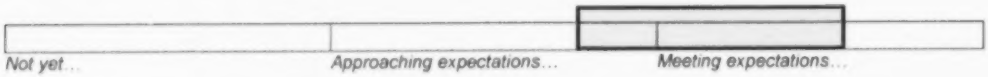
- Most schools monitor literacy data, analyze results and adjust instruction accordingly.
- The District is beginning to collect and analyze meaningful and measurable data regarding Aboriginal and ESL student results.
- The use of FSA results as performance targets in the Accountability Contract and School Improvement Plans does not fully represent the progress in student achievement.

7. *Communication:*
Improving districts and schools are involved in continuous dialogue about student achievement and make public their improvement goals and the progress being made in specific areas of focus.



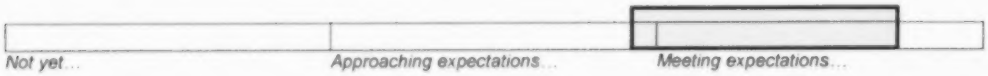
- Communication between district, school and community is substantive, meaningful and focused on student achievement.
- There is clear evidence that the voice of the Aboriginal community is honoured and valued.

8. *Teamwork – District and School Coherence*:
Improving districts and schools have an interactive strategy for connecting school and district goals. School uniqueness and school-district directions are both valued.



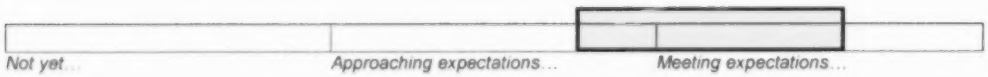
- The process of SMART learning, implemented at the school level, supports the implementation of the literacy goal at the district level.
- Some schools have thoughtful and interactive strategies in place to address the needs of Aboriginal students.
- The District acknowledges and celebrates the uniqueness of all schools.
- SMART learning strategies are being used in all programs to ensure the improved achievement of all students.

9. *Teamwork – District and Parent Involvement*:
Improving districts and schools work as a team with parents, including specific groups of parents, to improve student achievement.



- Several schools have exemplary involvement from School Planning Councils and other parent groups.
- The positive and mutually supportive relationship between the DPAC and the District is reflected at the school level.
- There are numerous creative strategies in place to involve less active parents.

10. *Leadership / Teamwork*:
Leaders in improving districts and schools have a clear vision for, and commitment, to improving achievement for all students. Leadership at all levels, in all roles, is encouraged and systematically developed in a collaborative learning community with a focus on improving student achievement.



- The District is recognizing and acting upon the knowledge that improving student achievement is dependent upon developing capacity of leaders at all levels of the District.
- The District and the First Nations Advisory Council are developing a shared vision and purpose which will form a strong foundation for the success of Aboriginal learners.

Strengths

The Team congratulates the District for the following strengths related to student achievement:

- The exemplary involvement of parents and employee groups in fully supporting learning at the district level.
- The involvement of parents in supporting learning at the school level.
- The joint development within Joint Education Implementation Committee of the protocol detailing district wide assessment.
- The comprehensive and systematic SMART reading and writing initiative that includes in-servicing, district research teams, grade groups, learning facilitators, graduate diploma program for teachers, report card alignment, and structural supports such as timetabling, enabled by district leadership and expertise.
- The Community School Co-ordinator's model has a significantly positive impact on student achievement.
- The respectful and productive relationship between the Aboriginal community and the School District as evidenced by the joint commitment to the Enhancement Agreement.

Promising Practices

The Team recognizes the following District and school practices that could be helpful to other districts with a similar focus:

- Implementation of School-Wide Writes on a consistent basis in K-12.
- Development and implementation of the Dynamics Smart Reading course (8-10 at New Westminster Secondary, 6-8 at the middle schools and currently being piloted at an elementary school), based on SMART learning, focusing on developing literacy skills across the curriculum.
- Enhanced Social Responsibility Performance Standards to reflect the Aboriginal perspective, based on work of Dr. Martin Brokenleg.
- ESL parents invited to read storybooks in their own language at the Kindergarten level which promotes the involvement of ESL parents, models reading practices and reassures parents that children do not lose their first language.

Recommendations

The Review Team respectfully suggests the following recommendations:

- That the District, in consultation with schools, examine the Dogwood completion rate in conjunction with transition rate in order to set strategies and structures to increase student success.
- That school improvement plans be expanded to include strategies and structures.
- That the District create performance targets based on both district and school data.
- That the District ensure that the Aboriginal education goals and objectives are reflected in all K-12 schools enrolling Aboriginal students with particular reference to data analysis, strategies and structures to improve student achievement and success. There is an opportunity to develop additional indicators that demonstrate and measure the success of Aboriginal students.